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Intelligence chief denies seeing data on Barbie

PARIS (Reuters) — A former head of France's secret service said yesterday he never saw a report allegedly alerting France to Nazi war criminal Klaus Barbie's presence in Bolivia as early as 1963.

Gen. Paul Jaquier, director general of the SDECE intelligence-gathering organization, told the newspaper Le Monde he would have remembered the report if it had been shown to him.

Le Monde yesterday published a copy of the report furnished by lawyer Serge Klarsfeld who helped track down Barbie, now in jail in France awaiting trial for crimes against humanity.

The secret report, bearing the imprint of the Defense Ministry, said a French army intelligence officer in West Germany learned in 1963 that Barbie was hiding in Bolivia under the name of Willms.

It said Barbie, who also used the name Klaus Altmann in Bolivia, was working for the United States and West German intelligence services.

Le Monde noted that France did not seek Barbie's extradition until 1972, although the former Gestapo officer had been sentenced to death in absentia by French courts in the 1950s.

The note asked for the information it contained to be circulated among French intelligence services.

Jacquier told Le Monde he had never seen the note.

"Most such requests are routine but this would not have been the case with regard to Barbie," he added. "If I had been told about it at the time, I would have remembered it today. This was not the case and the note means nothing to me."

Klarsfeld told Le Monde he had been in possession of the document for several years.

"I kept silent about it because I was deeply wounded to find that France knew officially where Barbie was at least since 1963."

Young Jews wearing concentration camp uniforms demonstrated last night outside the Lyons jail where Barbie is being held and said he should be tried by a Jewish court.

The report said German war crimes investigators discovered that Barbie was used by U.S. intelligence services immediately after the war.

Willms, his alias in Bolivia according to this account, was the maiden name of Barbie's wife.

Previous reports said Barbie became a naturalized Bolivian citizen as Klaus Altmann in 1957.

The Klarsfeld document said Barbie was in correspondence with his daughter, mother, aunt and mother-in-law, all of whom were living at different addresses at Trier in Germany.